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## **The Issue of Ethnicity and Democratization in Africa: Toward the Millennium**

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The PRC (Provisional Ruling Council) has . . . endorsed a modified presidential system in which six key executive and legislative offices will be zoned and rotated between six identifiable geographical groupings. In the implementation of this provision, the country has been divided into six zones: North-East, North-West, Middle Belt, South-West, East-Central and Southern Minorities. The national political offices, which will be filled by candidates on a rotational basis, are: the president, vice president, prime minister, deputy prime minister, senate president and speakers of the House of Representatives. The power sharing arrangement, which shall be entrenched in the constitution, shall be at federal level and applicable for an experimental period of 30 years.

Abacha, 1995, p. 7

The above assertion was made by the military leader of the most populous country in Africa in attempts to address and assuage the republic's geoethnic complexions, political perplexities and the quest to establish a viable democracy in the struggle for power in Nigeria. The same problem could be observed in South Africa, Cameroon, Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere in Africa. Ethnic politics was an issue that many African nationalists and

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Pan-Africanists thought had been thrashed out during the period of independence movement against colonial rule in the continent. Indeed, it is troubling to many observers that on the threshold of the next millennium, political ethnicity remains one of the daunting obstacles to the democratization enterprise in the area. The civil wars in Nigeria, Rwanda, and so forth were attributable to the

clashes of ethnic groups over the control of the apparatus of government for the allocation of the national pie. To this end, this study seeks to do the following: discuss concisely some theories of ethnicity, provide a few examples to illustrate its problems in the democratization process, and suggest ways that it could be ameliorated as Africa marches toward the 21st century.

## **ETHNICITY: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

The following discussion is intended to provide this disquisition with a theoretical super-structure from which to explore and explain the ethnicity paradox in African politics. At best, my analyses are going to be brief but sufficient to provide the necessary focus for the study.

Max Weber defined *ethnic groups* as “human groups (other than kinship groups) which cherish a belief in their common origins of such a kind that it provides a basis for the creation of a community” (Runciman, 1978, p. 364). Moreover, Weber coined the term *social closure* to describe one of the fundamental characteristics of ethnic groups (Stone, 1995). Social closure represents a strategy for group “survival” whereby social groups establish monopolies to eschew competition with rival groups that could be detrimental to the interest of a group (the monopolizer). It has been suggested that the philosophy of social closure dominates the scholarship of many students studying ethnicity in modern societies (Stone, 1995). In fact, the same might be said of traditional societies, too. It is a given that economic cost and benefits are associated with ethnic and racial group membership. That notwithstanding, though, to situate one’s comprehension and analysis on purely materialist reductionism may fail to explicate the complexities of some of the logical bases for individual identity and solidarity with a collectivity.

Ethnic competition theory emphasizes the function of resource competition as the rationale for ethnic group formation, interethnic clashes, and the crystallization of ethnic and political movements (Nagel, 1995). In a way, this view is somewhat analogous to the organizational or mobilizational ethnic paradigms within the context of constructivist paradigms (Gross, 1996). Organizational or mobilizational ethnic paradigms “view ethnicity as a political phenomenon and rationally constructed vehicle designed to further individual interests and exploit the ‘structure of opportunity’ in the host country” (Yancey, Erickson, & Julian, 1976, p. 400). In short, contends Gross (1996), organizational paradigm “relies on rational, voluntary choice and the instrumentality of political association” (p. 58). To derive their objectives, therefore, individuals and organizations sometimes develop ideologies and symbols that are used as their rallying cries to whip up support from group members (for example, the Zulus in South Africa).

Marxist theories on ethnicity are said to be relatively limited in the literature. But Marx and Engels have alluded to the role of political institutions in determining the economic and social configurations of any society. In particular, studies have referred to the state as the center for the reproduction of racial strata, for example, the United States and the Republic of South Africa, but scholars have tended to do so from a historic rather than a theoretical perspective. For instance, it was the state of South Africa and its legal institutions that in 1948 instituted the system of apartheid. Therefore, it is suggested that the state as a key element in the racism calculus should be taken seriously by scholars in the analysis of different national and political systems (Solomus & Black, 1995). Central to Marx's analysis of human society is the economic superstructure. Human interactions (ethnic, racial, and especially the class structure) are, thus, shaped around this major factor, but in the economic and class equation, race is only an ideology—a mask that covers real economic relationships (Miles, 1984).

Nnoli (1980) contends that, quite aside from the narrow focus on ethnicity, there is the whole issue of what weight should be attributed to it as an explanatory variable. The tendency is to point to ethnic discrepancies and visualize these antinomies as the principal ones in African societies. In the African continent,

ethnic problems are readily apparent and very real. But this is only at the level of mere empirical observation. Ethnic contradictions have an objective basis in the social structure of society. As an element of the ideological superstructure of society, ethnicity rests on, is functional for, and is determined by the infrastructure of society, the mode of production [and distribution]. (p. 11; see also Udogu, 1994)

Although the preceding theories and conjectures have been discussed on their own merits, it should be noted that a closer examination suggests that they are somewhat interconnected and overlap. In other words, no single theory is likely to explain the fuller meaning of political ethnicity and the behavior patterns of political entrepreneurs in Africa. The following selected country analysis should illuminate some of these suppositions and theories and help, I hope, shed some light on the problems of ethnic politics and democratization in the area.

## **NIGERIA**

Ethnicity in the politics of Nigeria is not novel because it has, since its inception as a sovereign nation-state, remained an important variable in the country's politics. One of the major concerns of ethnonationalism is based on the assumption that, in heterogeneous societies, the possibility for conflict is exacerbated by the degree and size of the various ethnic cleavages. Indeed, Hall (1979) contends that in the developing countries, the absence of ethnic conflict

in states with numerous ethnic groups was the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, in a plural society (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970), competitive politics are founded on ethnic politics based on who gets what, when, and how (Udogu, 1990).

As noted earlier, the birth of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria predates the postcolonial period, although its significance gathered momentum before and after independence when the competition for power and the survival of each ethnic group became the focal point of the republic's political leaders. The dysfunctional characteristics of ethnic politics was serious enough that the country addressed the issue in the 1979 constitution. For example, Article 15 (3) of the constitution states the following:

For the purpose of promoting national integration it shall be the duty of the state to—(a) provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the federation; (b) secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the Federation; (c) encourage intermarriage among persons from different places or origin, or different religious, ethnic or linguistic association or ties; and (d) promote or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious or other sectional barriers. (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1978, p. 16)

Additionally, Article 15 (4) states that, “The state shall foster a feeling of belonging and of involvement among the various peoples of the Federation, to the end that loyalty to the nation shall over-ride sectional loyalties” (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1978, p. 16). The assumption of this provision of the constitution was that it might lead to the reduction of ethnic tensions in the politics of the republic.

The involvement of the military in Nigerian politics has been addressed by many scholars; in particular, its attempts to mollify ethnic conflicts in the area in the struggle for power (Agbese, 1990). For instance, the creation of states (currently 36) by the military regimes has its roots in the assumption that they would fulfill what was considered to be legitimate demands for selfdetermination. The continued allure of ethnic politics, perhaps with the exception of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, has not abated (Udogu, 1995). In fact, ethnic pressures on the state continued with an increasing vigor during the military regimes. A case in point is the Ethnic Minority Right of Africa (EMIROAF), which argued for the creation of the following ethnic states: Ijaw, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa-Fulani, Ibibio, Kanuri, Edo, Nupe, Urhobo, Tiv, and Gbagyi (“One viewpoint,” 1994). Although the position of this group did not prevail, it nevertheless illustrated the depth of ethnonationalism among many Nigerians and the problem it might continue to create for democracy in the polity.

Ethnic politics in attempts to democratize the Nigerian system took on a serious twist following General Sani Abacha's military

coup of November 1993. Immediately following the coup, he announced that he was going to establish a constitutional conference to work out the modality for Nigeria's return to civilian rule. Almost immediately, various ethnic groups started coalescing and articulating strategies to influence the outcome of the convocation. Such ethnic groups as the Ijaws, Tivs, Igbos, Yorubas, Edos and Hausa-Fulanis presented their positions regarding the constitutional conference (Udogu, 1997a). The strategies of these ethnic groups were viewed to be instrumentalist and within the context of ethnic competition theory. In a broader framework, too, the contest related to the group that might become the custodian of the state and therefore be in a position to distribute scarce resources. So, one could explain the political jockeying for position during the constitutional conference within the Marxist dictum.

In 1998, the problematic Abacha transition program to democratic rule has been interpreted by some scholars as geoethnically driven. In this case, the competition is between the North (as represented by the Hausa-Fulani interest) and the Southwest (as symbolized by the Yoruba interest). Sani Abacha (a Kanuri) is the stalwart of the North, and Moshood Abiola (a Yoruba), presumed winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election is the flagbearer of the Southwest. The success or lack thereof of the present transition program to democratic governance depends, *inter alia*, on how the central government handles this ethnic imbroglio.

#### **KENYA**

One of the political concerns expressed by the leadership in many African countries is that if a multiparty system is allowed to flourish, that could lead to the formation of many ethnically-based political parties with their noncentripetal tendencies. Therefore, to curb a possible plethora of such parties, it was deemed necessary to opt for a single party system to avoid political chaos.

In Kenya, the dominant political philosophy and hypothesis (at least until 1992), was that a one-party system was more likely to further stability than a multiparty system. To encourage multipartism, single party advocates contend, could lead to deep ethnic crisis propagated by ethnically-oriented parties, social and economic distemper, and political disorder. In short, in such a *laissez-faire* political system, electoral contestations could result in a political Armageddon—a final battle that could lead to the balkanization of the nation-state.

This political gospel has been preached with some success until recently when the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other lending organizations imposed their economic conditionalities on Kenya, linking multiparty democracy with international loans. Besides the IMF and World Bank pressures on President Daniel arap Moi's regime to open up the political system,

there was the apprehension that in a free and fair election, he was likely to lose because of his unpopular policies. Perhaps more significantly was his fear that multiparty democracy could lead to ethnic politics, and because he is a Kalenjin, an ethnic minority group, it was a foregone conclusion that he could be defeated by the majority groups, as for instance, the Kikuyu.

To influence the outcome of the 1992 presidential election, some have alleged, a number of ethnically instigated clashes occurred in the area of the Rift valley. Indeed, the Kalenjin (which constitute about 4% of the Kenyan population) launched an attack in late 1991 and early 1992 on villages made up of Kikuyu, Luo, and Luhya ethnic groups with the loss of many lives (Nowrojee & Manby, 1993). The strategy was intended to warn the republic of the impending ethnic chaos that might befall the country should the nation be seduced by the notion of a multiparty democracy or further liberalization.

It would seem that given the nature of the political prologue to the 1992 election and the policies of the regime, that the opposition parties would be united in the single purpose of ousting arap Moi who has been in power since the death of the founding father, Jomo Kenyatta. But that was not to be the case. The union of the opposition politicians that was made up of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) could not hold the coalition together because of internal discrepancies stemming from irreconcilable ethnic interests and the hollowness or lack of solid programs to tackle the country's problems. Little wonder, then, that in October 1992, the alliance disintegrated into two ethnically-based political parties: FORD-Kenya and FORD-Asili. The leader of the former was the late Oginga Odinga, who drew his support from the Luo ethnic group, and the latter was Kenneth Matiba, with its roots in the southern Kikuyu. A third opposition party was led by the erstwhile vice-president, Mwai Kibaki, whose stronghold was among the northern Kikuyus (Holmquist & Ford, 1994). Indeed, not even the "ethnic cleansing" in the Rift valley was sufficient to unite the opposition in the presidential election that ensued.

In the democratic election that pitted arap Moi's Kenyan African National Union (KANU) against the rival parties, KANU won with 36% of the vote and maintained a majority of the members of parliament (108 out of the 188 seats). In fact, as Holmquist and Ford (1994) have noted, "no Kikuyu, and only one Luo in KANU won their seats and as a result the regime nominated former MPs from those ethnic groups [as a consociational or power sharing strategy to appease these major collectivities]" (p. 5).

#### **SIERRA LEONE**

In his analysis of ethnic politicization in Sierra Leone, Kandeh (1992) noted that whereas the Creoles dominated the political landscape

in precolonial Sierra Leone, it did not take long in the postcolonial era for the other major ethnic groups, Temnes and Limbas, to discover the power of ethnic solidarity in the struggle for political power. The lesson to be learned in the Sierra Leonian situation, as is the case elsewhere in Africa, is that the group that controls political power also determines how the national resources are to be distributed, but as Kandeh (1992) further noted, the linkage between competitive politics and the politicization of ethnic identities in Sierra Leone suggests, *inter alia*, that political ethnicity is primarily an instrumentalist phenomenon, its primordial underpinning notwithstanding. As an instrumentalist construct, political ethnicity tends to collapse the distinction between ethnic identity, on one hand, and political choices, affiliations and loyalties, on the other. (pp. 81-82.)

In the Sierra Leone case, following the peripheralization and marginalization of the hitherto dominant Creoles in the internal politics, the final battle (for the control of resources) was to be waged between the Mendes and Temnes. In the political duel or confrontation, Mendes (under the banner of the Sierra Leone People's Party [SLPP]) had to lock horns with the Temnes (under the aegis of the All People's Congress [APC]) for control of the apparatus of government. For example, following the 1988 election, the ethnic composition of the cabinet was 5 Mendes, 12 Temnes, 4 Limbas, 3 Creoles, and 3 others (Kandeh, 1992, p. 93). The allure and saliency of political ethnicity in the democratization process in Africa issues in part from the expectations of the various ethnic groups at the grassroots level. In fact, Carew (cited in Kandeh, 1992) notes,

The individual is seen as an embodiment of the tribe, consequently his fortunes are strongly identified with the fortune of the tribe. If he succeeds it is the tribe that has progressed, and if he fails it is the tribe that has suffered a setback. . . . [thus], each time a high office goes to someone in the community his or her tribesmen jubilate openly, culminating finally in a delegation to the Head of State [with special gifts] to thank him for the appointment of their son or daughter to the high office. (p. 94)

Such jubilation could be taunting to the neighboring ethnic groups, who watch from the sideline, because they are not so blessed with a similar fortune. Indeed, what this does is aggravate and sharpen ethnic competition for political power in a future election.

#### **RWANDA AND BURUNDI**

The proceeding analysis is predicated on the disastrous events that occurred in Rwanda and Burundi that have an ethnic overtone. However, whereas journalistic narrations of the crisis in these republics accentuate ethnicity as the causal factor of the carnage in the countries, serious analytic interpretation of the crisis shift the

focus and locus of the mayhem to the nation-state; that is, which ethnic group controls the nation-state and a priori the distribution of goods and services (Lemarchand, 1994; Newbury, 1988). On this score, Walters (1995) notes,

When the assumption of the nation-state is taken away, the divide between the Hutu and Tutsi can at the same time be presented as trivial . . . as the basis for [ethno]nationalist ideologies. . . . In other words, there is nothing inherent to the nature of Hutuism or Tutsism which leads to fratricide. (p. 345)

Indeed, the same argument could be posited elsewhere in the continent. What is problematical, in terms of ethnic competition theory, is that Burundi has the same mix of majority Hutus and minority Tutsis as in Rwanda, but the army and civil service are dominated by the minority Tutsis—a rather peculiar situation in Africa. This is so because most dominant ethnic groups in the area tend to control political power and to use that position to control the army and bureaucracy. In Rwanda and Burundi, however, such a reverse political equation has created conflictual relations between the two major groups (Hutus and Tutsis) with the Twas and other groups sufficiently marginalized. That notwithstanding, the doctrine pro-pounded by a number of scholars in the continent's conflict is that ethnicity is manipulated by the elite for political gains. On this issue, Ihonvbere (1994) notes that, "[The] politicization of ethnicity all over the continent has never been a basis for effective mobilization and national unity. It has generated deep-rooted suspicions, massacres, wastage of resources and general insecurity and confusion. In the end, the quest for nationhood suffers" (p. 54). This condition in recent years has been exacerbated by the IMF and World Bank Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in Africa.

## CAMEROON

The discussion of ethnic politics in Cameroon presents a unique case from the perspective of its tripartite characteristic; that is, anglophile, francophile, and indigenous complexions. In addition to the problematic marriage of French and English traditions in this multiethnic and multilingual state, political competition for power tends to sharpen the ethnic walls, interests, and differences.

In the drive to amalgamate the two major blocs in the Cameroonian polity, the late President Amadou Ahidjo opted for a great single unifying political party. In such a party, contended Ahidjo, democracy and freedom of speech would blossom and reign supreme, while simultaneously allowing contradictory tendencies and constructive criticisms to flourish within the party as part of the hallmark of a truly democratic society (LeVine, 1971). In any case, this was hardly ever the situation.

Indeed, Takougang (1996) has noted that it might be true that the



one-party system mollified the threat to national unity and debarred the proliferation of ethnic political parties, but that recent developments in the country suggest that after more than three decades of one-party rule not much changed to promote the spirit of nationhood that overrode or superseded ethnic and regional identities.

The political space enlargement in 1990 by the Paul Biya administration literally let the “cat out of the bag,” in a manner of speaking. The liberalization of the political system in the wake of the political and economic pressures brought to bear on the system by international lending organizations led to the formation of political parties in 1992 for the multiparty legislative and presidential elections.

In this arrangement, the following parties were formed along ethnic and regional lines: Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM), with its support among the Beti-Pahouin collectivity in the center, south, and east provinces; the National Union for Progress and Democracy (NUDP), Foulbe and northern-Moslem dominated; the Social Democratic Front (SDF), Bamileke, Anglophone of the west province; Union des Populations du Cameroun (UDC) garnered its support from the Bassas in the littoral and west province; the Movement for Defense of the Republic (MDR) drew its support from Kirdi ethnic group in the far north province (Takougang, 1996).

The formation of these ethnoregional parties was not intended to further democracy per se. Rather, they were created within the context of resource competition theory for the control of amenities and scarce resources. This was important for the improvement of the ethnic constituencies. In such political confrontations, the nationstate is only relevant to the extent that it is being used to further group interest and advantage. In this regard, Uzodike (1996) notes that,

Africa’s current economic problems do not just betray a crisis of the state but also its problems of scarcity and management (of economy and distribution). So whereas democracy or political liberalization can provide a more conducive environment for restructuring the state and management, it will not provide a palliative for the problems of scarcity in many countries. It is because of resource scarcity and the penalty that awaits losers of political contests (and their supporters) that political control is accorded much importance throughout the continent. (p. 31)

How do these brief preceding analyses on political ethnicity impact on democracy today and the future? An answer to this query will form the basis of the following analyses. First, it might be necessary to situate this study within the framework of democratic theory.

## **DEMOCRACY: A BRIEF THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

Germane to the ensuing analysis is an attempt to establish a general theoretical paradigm within which this disquisition might be conceptualized. My endeavor here is not to discuss the realist versus idealist theories of democracy. Indeed, my analysis will tend to be more eclectic. In this way, I might be able to situate this article within the broader framework of ethnic politics in Africa.

Let it suffice to say that there are theoretical problems stemming from the definitional complexities of democracy. For instance, in defining *democracy*, Schumpeter (1960) visualized it in terms of method rather than goals; democracy is therefore an “arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (p. 269). Lasswell (Lasswell, Lerner, & Rothwell, 1952) contends that a system could be termed a *democracy* even if power is exercised by a few elites and situated the onus on accountability. In the African case, Mazrui (1986) contends that a system in which the elders (or chiefs) of a community met and debated societal problems until a consensus was reached (an oath taken to abide by the decision) and represented a form of African democracy and accountability.

Generally, realist scholars argue that there are democratic theories, not just overarching theories (Cnudde & Neubauer, 1969). So, Ranney and Kendall (1969, pp. 41-43; see also Harris, 1983) contend that the minimum characteristics of a democracy include the following:

1. “Popular sovereignty; that is, those who hold office . . . must stand ready, in some sense, to do whatever the people want them to do, and to refrain from doing anything the people oppose”;
2. “Political equality; this means that each member of the community . . . should have, in some sense, as good a chance as his/her fellows to participate in the community’s decision-making—no better and no worse”; and
3. “Popular consultation and majority rule; this involves an understanding that when the enfranchised members of the community disagree as to what ought to be done, the last word lies, in some sense, with the larger number and never the smaller.”

In the words of Schattschneider (1960), democracy is a competitive political system in which competing actors and groups define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process. This means a system that involves the broadest or widest number of people in the decision.

Also, it is contended by some scholars that the elites, not the masses, are the true custodians of democracy and human rights. In this respect, Key (1961) notes that, “The critical element for the health of democratic order consists in beliefs, standards, and competence of those who constitute the influential, the opinion leaders

and the political activists” (p. 558). A more contemporary traditional democratic theory is grounded on a number of axioms. For example, Dahl (1983) suggests five pillars on which democracy could be sustained. These are the equality of voting, effective participation, enlightened understanding, final control (of a body or group of citizens) over the agenda, and inclusion.

These foregoing analyses were intended to illuminate some of the characteristics of democracy and to provide a backdrop against which ethnic politics in the area might be examined and perhaps better understood. It is given that one of the central elements of a democratic system is competition for vote or support from the electorates. It is such support that helps legitimize the system, but systems in which support are sought after on the basis of ethnicity tend to suffer from the problem of legitimacy and instability. This, in turn, hampers democratic development. Indeed, the competition for ethnic hegemony in the governance of various polities in Africa has rendered the state problematic, and interethnic relations conflictive. The centrifugal tendencies of ethnic rivalries, therefore, tend to render the state “irrelevant” (Ihonvbere, 1994) to a majority of the ethnic minority groups, especially those marginalized because they were on the losing end in ethnically-oriented political contests (Udogu, 1994). This has, in some cases, led to military coups and the abortion of democracy. Nigeria is a classic case in point. Also, ethnic groups (especially those peripheralized) may withhold their support for the state and in some instances attempt to destabilize it through sabotage and guerrilla wars (e.g., the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola or UNITA). These are very few examples and they are related to ethnic dissatisfaction with the distribution of power and the nation’s resources. Such unstable political situations tend to render the flowering of democracy extremely problematic in Africa. How might the problem of ethnic politics be ameliorated so that democracy could be furthered as the continent marches toward the 21st century? This will be the subject of my concluding analyses.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

There are numerous solutions that have been suggested by political practitioners and scholars concerned about the destabilizing effect of ethnic politics in Africa. On the practical side, in Kenya, Tanzania, and Cameroon, until recently the argument has been in favor of the formation of a single-party system. The contention was that if all the ethnic groups belonged to one party, the problem of “tribal” politics, with its conflictual dimensions, would be eradicated and stability would be established. Other countries, like Uganda, are experimenting with a system that the republic refers to as no-party democracy. The assumption is that because political parties in Uganda tend to be formed along ethnic lines, a no-party democracy would eliminate ethnic competition that has a propensity

for destroying democracy in that country because it encourages political thuggery and riots. Whereas the former conception has been discredited by political reality, the latter is under scrutiny by political observers.

On the theoretical side, however, the fundamental assumptions and hypotheses that might serve as the guiding frameworks for the formation of a stable polity in the multiethnic and multilingual Africa are propounded by Scarritt and Safran (1983). They contend that ethnic political mobilization and ethnically-based control of political institutions would be less likely to significantly strain democracy, and may facilitate or promote it “if they

1. occur within, exist alongside, or help produce several institutionalized, powerful interest groups which draw their members from all or most ethnic identity groups in the society in sufficient numbers that these interest groups are popularly identified as crossethnic or non ethnic;
2. occur within, exist alongside, or help produce one or more crossethnic, institutionalized political parties or stable coalitions among parties which are able to control government, usually through controlling a majority of seats in the legislature; and
3. occur in the presence of or help produce a cross-ethnic leadership cadre of politicians and civil servants who are perceived by themselves and by the public as able to work together effectively in spite of ethnic differences without compromising any member’s standing in his or her own ethnic identity groups.” (p. 19)

Whereas the foregoing hypotheses represented, one might argue, the assumed behavior patterns of the political class in the period before independence, this is hardly ever the situation in much of Africa today. This by no means implies that these ideologies and philosophies have been abandoned. It is just that given the political and economic conditions in postindependence Africa, exacerbated by the impact of the Structural Adjustment Program, deemphasizing ethnic claims to natural resources in favor of the well-being of the nation-state is not so popular. It is sometimes construed as a betrayal and could lead to political and social ostracism for actors espousing national as opposed to subnational interests.

Furthermore, to promote peace and democracy in Africa in the next millennium, it is imperative to adhere to what Obasanjo (1990) termed *strategic imperative* for the promotion of the desire of the African people. Strategic imperative includes responsiveness and efficiency in governance, trust creation and confidence building that must be between the governor and the governed, decentralization of power to the grassroots, pluralism and decentralization of the economy, political communication, education and political education, promotion and defense of human rights, creation of appropriate political machinery, renewal of mandate and succession program, and popular participation in all aspects of the development process (Obasanjo, 1990; Udogu, 1997b).

In brief, some of these dimensions epitomize a process of governance that is characterized by transparency and accountability—two ingredients that are, inter alia, essential for the sustainability of democracy in the continent. Administratively, too, the preceding conjectures approximate the views of such scholars as Lijphart and others, who explored a consociational or power sharing scheme for the governance of multiethnic and divided societies such as Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria, and so forth (Lijphart, 1967, 1995). In fact, a tenet of the 1993-1994 constitution of Nigeria, which called for the rotation of the presidential system along geoethnic strata (North-East, North-West, Middle Belt, South-West, East Central, and Southern minorities) is similar to this power-sharing mechanism.

In sum, regardless of these practical and theoretical solutions to the problems of political ethnicity and the future of democracy in Africa, if the people are hungry these solutions would be meaningless. After all, democracy and the rule of law have triumphed in North America and Europe (despite their heterogeneity) because of economic prosperity in these systems (Udogu, 1997c). To this end, Africa is likely to advance the process of democracy in the next millennium if it revitalizes the economy, and produces altruistic leaders who are determined and capable of putting the national interest above their individual and geoethnic group. Indeed, the politicoeconomic success story of Botswana might provide a model for much of Africa.

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